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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, AUGUST 13, 2007

In Today's Papers

Week of Decisions on the Presidential Election
All papers report the AKP is expected to announce its candidate for the presidential election this week. Prime Minister Erdogan hinted on Friday there might be more than one candidate nominated when he referred to "candidates" in remarks to the press. Gul, the AKP's sole candidate for the post in an earlier attempt in May, is widely expected to be a frontrunner once more. AKP sources said Labor Minister Murat Basesgioglu and Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul could also be nominated. The AKP is expected to agree on the names for the race after the cabinet of ministers meeting and party group meetings today. Sources claim although the AKP has until August 19 to announce a name, it won't wait until the deadline and will announce its candidate this week. Cumhuriyet quotes AKP sources as saying the two candidates who receive the lowest votes in the first two rounds of voting in the parliament will withdraw, allowing the AKP's remaining candidate to win the ballot in the third round of voting, scheduled for August 28. Main opposition CHP and its electoral ally, the Democratic Left Party (DSP) announced over the weekend they were inclined to support Basesgioglu, a former ANAP politician. The first round of voting will be held in the parliament August 20, and the second and third rounds August 26 and 28 respectively. A two-thirds majority (367 votes) is needed for election in the first two rounds while a simple majority (267 votes) would be sufficient in the third round.

Iraqi Kurds Express Support for the PKK
All papers report Kurdish regional administration leader Massoud Barzani's Kirkuk representative Kadir Aziz told the Kurdish PUK Media website they did not see the PKK as a terror organization, stressing the Kurds "strongly objected" to the deal Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki signed with Turkey to fight against the PKK. "The Kurds and Shiites form the majority of the Maliki government; our approval is necessary when taking important decisions with neighboring countries. The Kurds, Americans and coalition forces cannot take the risk of opening a new front in Iraq. We prefer a peaceful solution to the PKK problem through dialogue," Aziz said.

The Kurdish regional administration's peshmerge commander Sheikh Cafer Mustafa also told the website the Kurds in northern Iraq will not fight against the PKK.

Turkey-Iran-Pakistan to Finalize Preferential Trade Deal
Liberal Radikal reports Kursad Tuzmen, state minister for foreign trade, said he expects a boom in Turkey's trade with Iran and Pakistan after the Economic Cooperation Organization Trade Agreement (ECOTA) stipulating customs tariff cuts between the three countries goes into effect in the first months of 2008. In late July, a delegation from the Energy Ministry traveled to Tehran to finalize a preliminary deal between the governments of the two countries. Part of the deal will enable Turkey to use Iran as a transit route for Turkmen gas. Tuzmen said trade among ECO countries, amounting to some five percent for each country, would boom once the preferential trade agreement takes effect.

Equipment Meant for the PKK Seized in Mersin
Mainstream Milliyet reports Hakan A., a Turkish truck driver arrested in Mersin last week with state-of-the-art radios, medical equipment and body heaters aboard his vehicle, took the equipment from a Turk employed at the NATO base in Giessen, Germany. The driver was to take the cargo to the PKK in northern Iraq. Police said the equipment did not belong to NATO. Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) is expected to ask Germany for help to find out how the driver obtained the equipment, says Milliyet.

Water Crisis in Ankara
All papers continue reporting on the suffering in Ankara from water cuts, saying many in the Turkish capital believe the drought is not natural, but a manmade disaster brought on by mismanagement of water resources. The city has to supply water to hospitals in tankers and

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has called for the opening of schools to be delayed by a month until mid-October. Ankara also has started building a 375-kilometre pipeline to bring water from Kizilirmak, the country's longest river. Opposition CHP is reportedly planning to table a motion against Prime Minister Erdogan for failing to remove from office Ankara Metropolitan Mayor Melih Gokcek.

Since October the northwest Marmara region, home to Turkey's largest city Istanbul, has received rain 34 percent less than normal, while the Aegean coast has seen 43 percent less than the usual level. The Union of Turkish Chambers of Agriculture estimates the drought has cost farmers USD 3.9 billion, and the meteorology service has warned that autumn rains in western and central Turkey are unlikely to end the drought.

Editorial Commentary on Iraq; Russia and Global Security
Semih Idiz writes in the mainstream daily Milliyet: "With the situation in Iraq heading toward an impasse, efforts are underway to increase the role of the United Nations. The US Ambassador to the UN has talked about their intention to call an Iraqi neighbors conference under the auspices of the UN. Interestingly, Iran and Syria are also included in the conference participants list which clearly shows the helplessness of Washington vis-à-vis the Iraq situation. In addition to that Baghdad is also preparing itself for a possible post-US-withdrawal period. Iraqi officials are well aware of the fact that they will have to be on good terms with their neighbors once the US forces leave. Relations with Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran are very important for Iraq especially for security-related matters. Syria, Jordan and Kuwait are also important for humanitarian reasons especially for the future of Iraqi refugees. All of these developments indicate that Turkey has to see the Iraq issue in a broader context and should not take the PKK issue as the sole angle. Otherwise Turkey might be out of the game, ignoring the new circumstances and the changing equilibrium."

Zafer Atay writes in the business and political daily Dunya:
"Following the demise of the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact not only dissolved but some of its members joined NATO. In the meantime Moscow could not get rid of its negative obsession regarding the NATO alliance; Russia is still suspicious of the Western alliance. In an effort to unite the former Soviet countries, Moscow managed to

establish the Union of Independent States and the Shanghai Five with China, which was expanded to include new participants recently. The Shanghai Cooperation group just launched a giant exercise with 6500 soldiers. Although both Beijing and Moscow deny this group is meant to be an alternate to NATO, the member states are expected to sign a cooperation agreement to form a defense shield. Iran, Pakistan, India and Mongolia are observers to the ongoing exercise and there is a possibility that they will join the alliance. Given the huge populations and powerful armies of China and Russia, participation of the current observers will not only lead to the formation of Asian NATO, but also will change the world power equilibrium."

TV News:
(NTV, 6 A.M.)
Domestic News

- Thirteen Turkish soldiers and two civilians, were wounded when a PKK roadside landmine went off in Eruh in the southeastern province of Siirt.

- Writer Nevval Sevindi said she will run for the Democrat Party (DP) chairmanship. DP leader Mehmet Agar had quit his party after failing to cross the 10-percent threshold in the general elections.

- Hundreds of environment activists including the city mayor held a protest demonstration in the eastern city of Tunceli, calling on the

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government not to build dams on the Munzur River, saying it would damage the ecology of the province.

International News

- The new Greek Cypriot Foreign Minister Erato Kozaku-Markulli said the Turkish military and not Turkish politicians holds the key to a solution in Cyprus.

- The northern Iraqi PUK website says the high commission for implementing the constitutional article on Kirkuk is to convene after five months in Baghdad, and is expected to speed up work for holding a controversial referendum on the fate of the oil rich city.

- Britain's Sunday Telegraph reports a sudden pullout of US and UK forces from Iraq will spark civilian strife and divide the country into three zones, dragging Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia into the conflict.

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